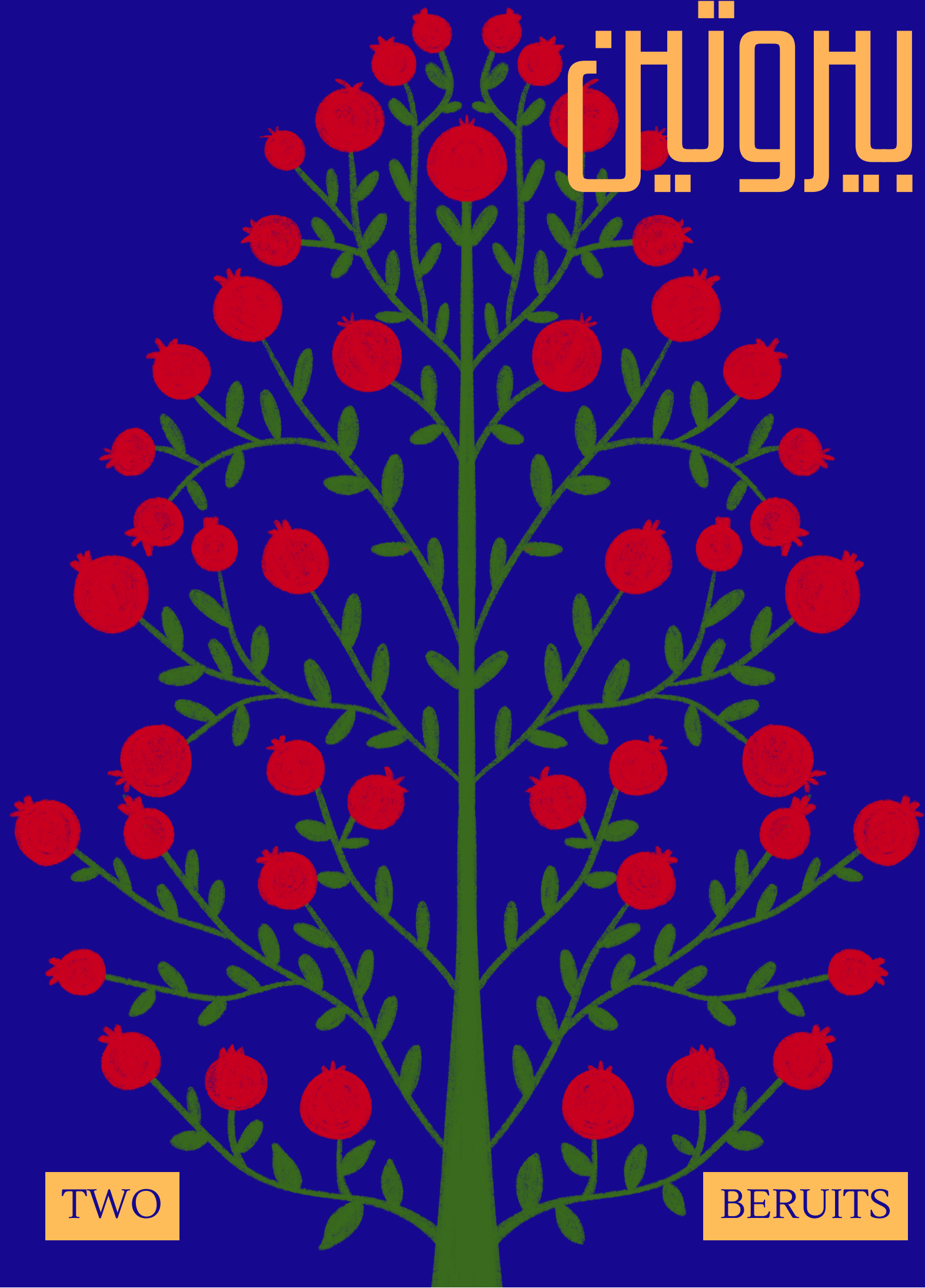


# پروتين



TWO

BERUITS



PASSPORT  
PASSEPORT  
PASAPORTE

# PASSPORT

Type/Type/Type

Code/Code/Código

Passport No



Surname DARWICH

Given Names AYAH

Nationality AUSTRALIAN

Sex / Sexe / Sexo

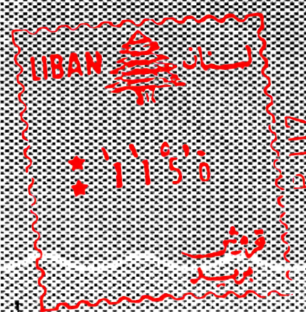
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Place of birth FAHREH-D Authority / Autorité / Autoridad

Date of issue

Date of expiration

Endorsements



90126522274-0001

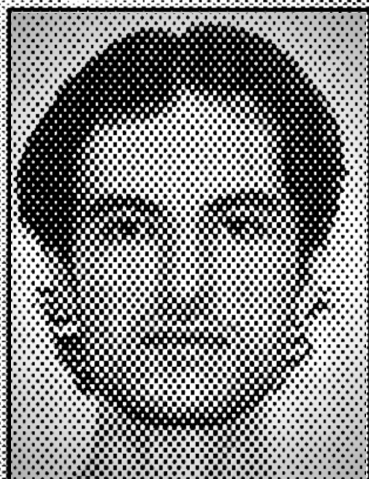
PASSPORT  
PASSEPORT  
PASAPORTE

# PASSPORT

Type/Type/Type

Code/Code/Código

Passport No



Surname ALI

Given Names JUNAID

Nationality AUSTRALIAN

Sex / Sexe / Sexo

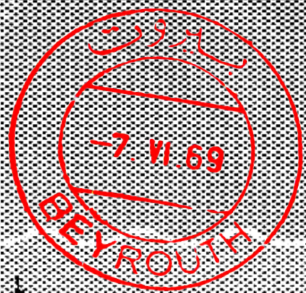
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Date of issue

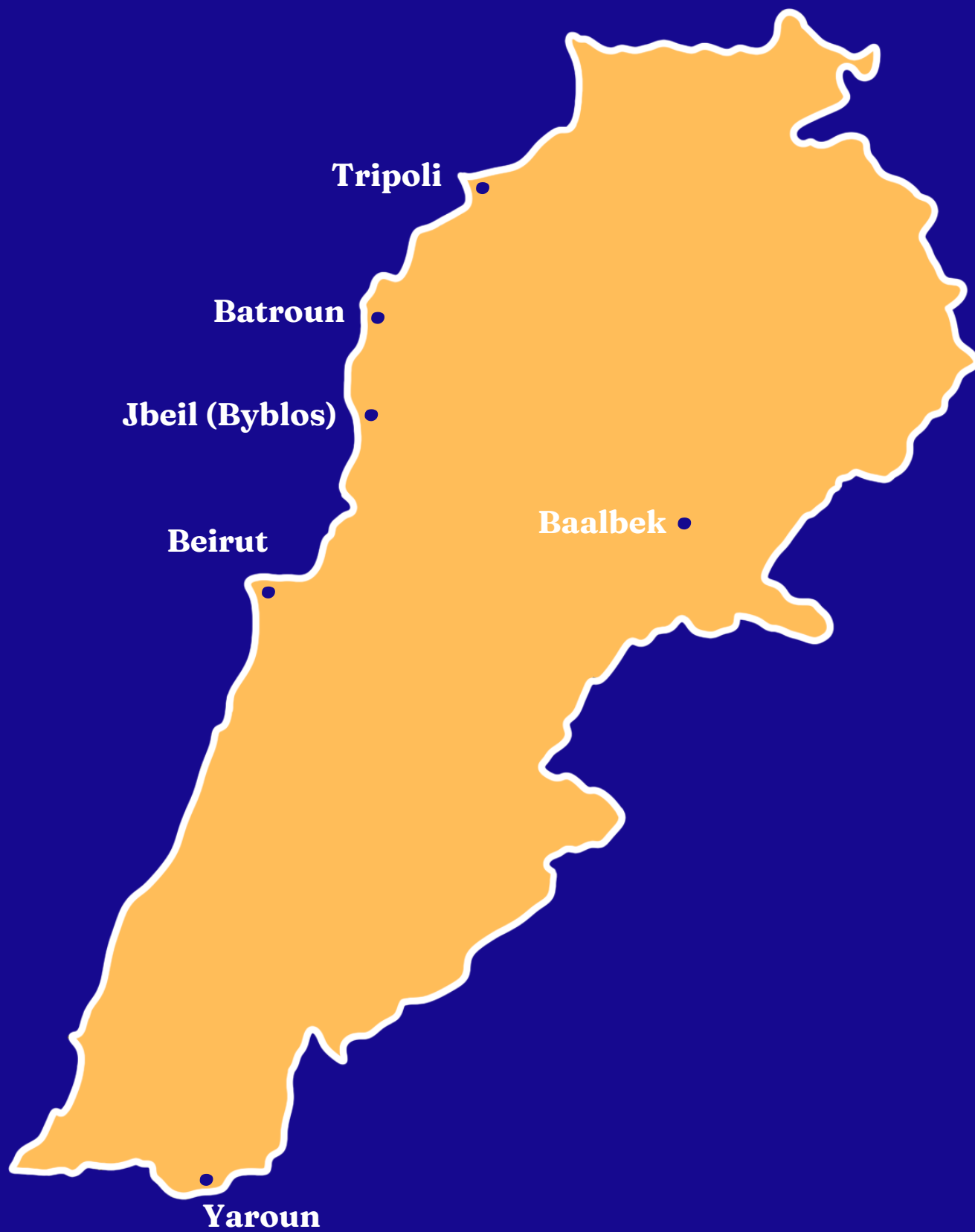
Date of expiration

Endorsements



90126522274-0001







لبنان



10P

LIBAN  
POSTE AERIENNE



# بروتين

Beruitain is a collection of poetry, music, writing and photo media. It is a digital gallery of our experiences as diaspora in Lebanon, searching for ourselves, creating art and finding community.

It all began when Junnade and I stayed in Beirut and we challenged ourselves to write a poem a day. Did we succeed? No. We did not. But what we did write has been included in the following pages. When we told our friend Zeinab about our idea to make a zine about she was excited to get involved, so we have included her work too as well as graphic design by Simone Wang.

Dear reader, this is the Lebanon that has been hidden from you. The paradoxical, restless, affectionate, not for the faint of heart, Lebanon. This project has been a labour of love for all of us and we proudly present it to you.

**From Lebanon,  
With love.**



# ITINERARY

**7 / ————— JOY MODERNA  
(A PLAYLIST)**

**8 / ————— JUNNADE**

**22 / ————— ZEINAB**

**28 / ————— AYAH**



# JOY MODERNA

a playlist

- ◉ Khalas by Ziad Rahbani
- ◉ Allo... Beyrouth by Sabah
- ◉ Mourir sur scène by Dalida
- ◉ Bahlam Maak by Ritza
- ◉ Ana w Bass by Elissa
- ◉ Jamala by Joseph Attieh
- ◉ Ah Yani by Saif Nabeel
- ◉ Aam Betaala' Feek  
by Nancy Ajram

# JUNNADE



# ALI



03/09

Is slumber by the Mediterranean  
Allowed for those who come from  
Golden stolen countries  
Who want nothing more  
Under a burning sun  
Than sleep that cools  
Bodies under hidden pressure  
Like ice that kisses  
Sunburnt skin so softly  
Though the warm embrace  
Of wakefulness always  
Saves from sleepy liquor's  
Somewhat sobering secrets.

15/09

My God, would a thousand prayers  
With a thousand dripping tears

Fill the valley of a moment  
That lasts a thousand years

And would a thousand earnest prayers  
Calm a shattered earnest soul

And would a single honest word  
Convey this feeling whole ?



18/09

Pull me so far in  
That my sea is the colour of the sky  
And a thousand colours on the surface  
Keep the secret of my depths  
Where colour does not reach  
I am the red and orange and blue,  
The pink and white  
On the face of a wave  
As it begins and ends

19/09

Are you seriously searching  
For pockets of warmth  
In the Mediterranean Sea  
As if an ocean of love  
Could swallow you whole  
And reduce you to deep nothingness  
A memory of the raindrop  
That brought you here



06/11

I think I fell into the cup  
Of youth I went to get you  
From the bar as you waited  
Between speakers playing  
A hundred thousand synths  
For a hundred thousand lovers

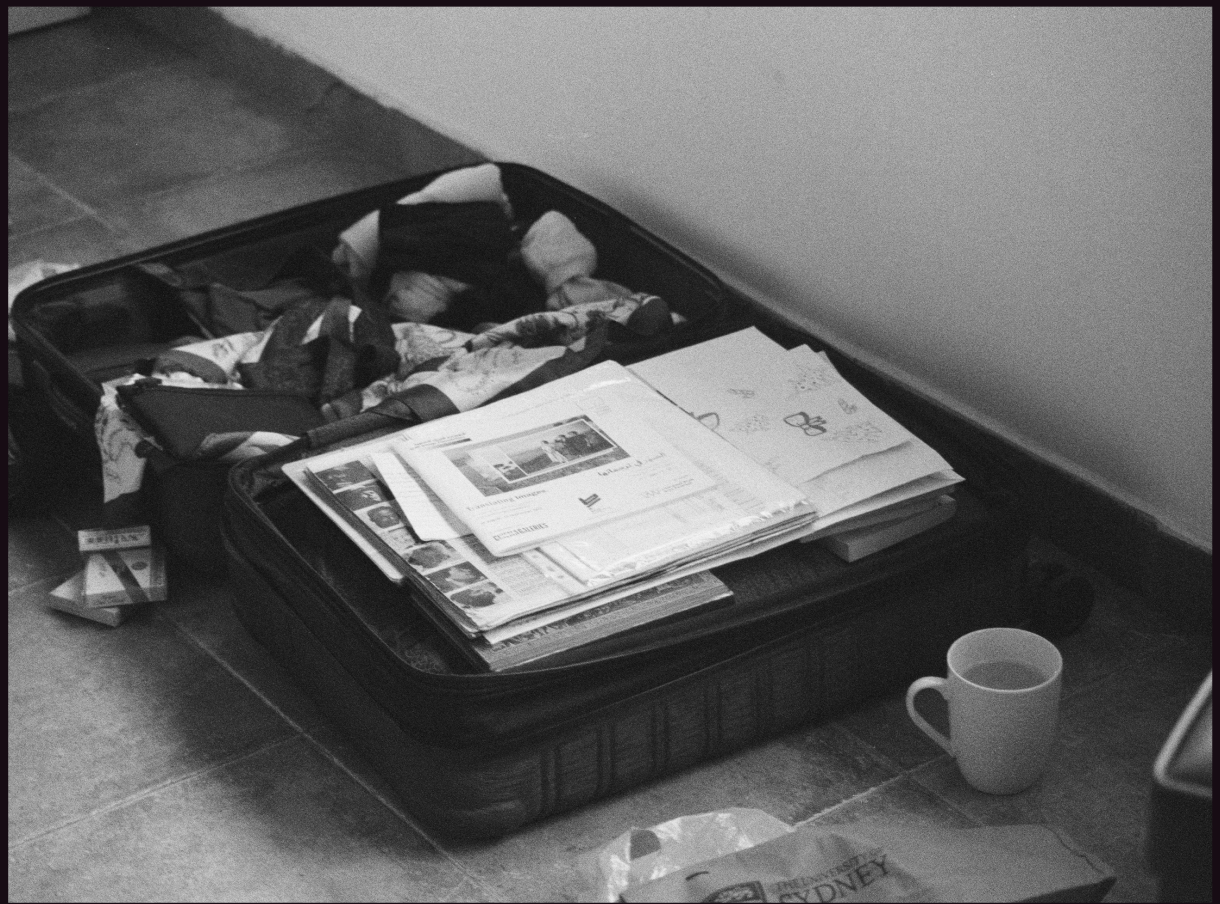
That you could stand  
Between smoke machine and laser light  
As I wished  
To be your sweet  
Eyeliner































**ZEINAB**



**MAHFOUD**

# BEIRUT / 2023

This two-part collage was created to express my daily confusion, exploration, and learning experience of the Arabic language. Having only learned Arabic informally as a child, I'm well overdue for an update, linguistically and culturally.

There is a sense of satisfaction when I'm able to figure out the spelling, and meaning or even identify the root of a word; there is a sense of entrapment when I try to express my personality through conversations in Arabic. My humor isn't automatically transferred and my knowledge of topics isn't easily shared.

The letter ة was once described to me as pulling the two ends of ت together and tying them up.

Relatable, as I pull together the broken Arabic from the southern villages in the 70s and the metropolitan Beirut Arabic of today, to create what is my native tongue, my intermediate dialogue, and basic understanding.

Using شكرًا instead of thank you or merci is a clue to my foreignness in this crossword puzzle of a conversation.







## trees between borders



When I first moved to Lebanon I would spend the early morning with my tata and her neighbour out in the fields. Pictured are the hands of my tata dividing the hawthorn fruit from the leaf.



# trees between borders



Pictured are my tata and her neighbour picking haws. The hawthorn trees are planted between two people's land to mark their borders. I also learnt a new word, زعرور meaning hawthorn. Until today I thought it meant cranberries.



# trees between borders



Hajj Zoher. It's weird to meet someone for the first time and have them see you as their child, treat you as if they've known you your whole life. Every time I saw the Hajj, we would talk about my future in Lebanon, talks about marriage, talks about growing and maintaining produces, and the difference between Western/Arab life. He lived part of his life in New York, and migrated back to Lebanon. I'm grateful for his welcoming, opening and generous heart.



**AYAH**



**DARWICH**



# conversations with the lebanese

## socrates

## محادثات مع سقراط اللبناني

My first night out in Beirut, a man at the table next to ours celebrates his 30th birthday. In the dark ambiance of this bar, we sit close to one another, imitating intimacy. Strawberry cheesecake, iced glasses of gin and mint. Socrates is sitting at the bar, he mourns the passing of time and family that has long since left him behind, the only one that remains. 'To be reminded of our own age is to be confronted with mortality, a concept that disturbs us because it eludes understanding.' He considers me for a second and nods approvingly. He warns Junnade and I to be cautious.

**"The lebanese, can be charming on the outside but scratch the surface of their skin and underneath is the truth."**

I have come to Lebanon at the most inconvenient time, in the midst of an economic crisis. The streets are lined with obscene graffiti, ATMs are covered in red paint resembling blood and the banks have been closed for weeks. The people are restless and there is a feeling of imminent conflict. In spite of the socio-political climate, daily life continues.

At nine in the morning, the streets are empty. In the warm air, I water the plants and slice nectarines for breakfast, Junnade heats chai on the stove. Cold showers, aloe vera moisturiser, sitting in front of the mirror as I brush my hair. The beginning of each day starts with no electricity and the sound of our footsteps peeling away from tiles. I descend the endless flight of stairs and make it out to the street to catch my bolt. I rest my arm on the car window and the wind tangles my hair. The city disappears from view covered in a haze of pollution.

I arrive in the Mina, slamming the door as the driver gestures furiously, demanding more money than we agreed upon. Local men sit on plastic chairs, eyes like daggers, gazing sharply. Tayteh calls to me from her apartment, hurrying downstairs to welcome me at the door. Her tanned skin, wrinkled and soft, curves into a smile as she kisses me. Once I'm inside, she leads me to the kitchen, beaming proudly while she stirs a pot of beans and prepares a side dish of olives. Her fingers smell like fresh garlic and cigarette smoke. We finish eating, she prays Dhuhr and we walk out the door.

# conversations with the lebanese

## socrates

## محادثات مع سقراط اللبناني



Across from the clock tower In the Tal, vendors assault us as we pass. Carts of colourful lollies, fragrant nuts and questionable gold jewellery litter the bustling sidewalk. Tayteh laces her arm through mine, gripping me close, leading me to a park. The water fountain is empty, pink roses grow in shade and couples lean on benches, leaning into each other. 'This park is for lovers' she smiles innocently 'Your Jedo and I would meet here.' My grandmother has always been hopelessly romantic, a trait that is distinctly Lebanese. The Arabic language is inherently affectionate, strangers you've just met casually refer to you as Habibti 'My love', or Hayati 'My life'.

We walk beside the river underneath the Citadel. The setting sun casts an orange shade over the city and it almost looks beautiful. My Tayteh invents stories about the palace to fill the silence, hangings, stolen princesses and floods worthy of biblical scale. She lights a smoke to cover the smell of garbage emanating from the river. I stand beside her looking up at the vibrant-hued buildings cascading over the land, walls of soft blue and faded yellow paint, satellite dishes, and laundry floating in the breeze. The city rests, lulled to sleep by the heat of the lazy afternoon. She throws her cigarette into the river 'Yallah' I'll take you to where your Jedo used to live, my parents said never to marry someone where he's from.'

Lebanon is shrouded in collective nostalgia, for the people who have lived here long enough. Buildings lay in mounds of concrete rubble. Faded pictures of Fairuz and Um Koulthum hang like shrines, embalmed in a fantasy that no longer exists, that the Lebanese people fiercely refuse to surrender. The Golden Years loom over a collapsing metropolis, a bitter reminder that we are not who we used to be. To romanticise our past has become a normality and we no longer look to the future, we look back, mesmerised by black-and-white photographs, streets we once walked, and stories we tell to amuse ourselves.



# converstions with the lebanese

## محادثات مع سقراط اللبناني

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After I see my Jedo's house, Tayteh takes me to the cemetery to visit her family. Her dad was tall and gentle with kind blue eyes and blonde hair. Her mum was short and stubborn, with dark features and a stern nature. She was completely enamoured by my great-grandfather. They both passed away within a week of each other. Tayteh stands in front of her parent's grave like a child, small and fragile. I turn around to give her privacy and spot a middle-aged man staring at us. He has a bald head and a pleasant face, framed by thick eyebrows. I smile at him but his eyebrows furrow and he approaches us swiftly. He starts to speak to my Tayteh with an accusing tone, all in Arabic so I'm not sure what he's saying. I'm immediately wary until both of them start sobbing. She turns to me, her body shaking 'This is my cousin, he was a baby when I left.' Suddenly he's smiling and I nod my head to say hello. I feel my destiny unfolding gently like the scent of jasmine flowers in the night.

A few days later, Tayteh waits with me on the street for a taxi. Once it arrives she takes a photo of the number plate, passes the driver a wad of cash, and tells me to call her when I reach Beirut. Three men; A middle-aged engineer, a young policeman, and a quiet red-haired army officer converse energetically in the backseat. Their Arabic flows smoothly and easy laughter fills the small car. I choose a playlist and settle into a comfortable position, happy for the hour-long drive and the time to decompress before I get back to the noise of the city. A few minutes pass, and there is a tap on my shoulder.

**'We want to talk with you, can we ask questions?'**

The engineer shyly asks. I pack my AirPods away and introduce myself while he translates for his friends. **'Darwich? You're Lebanese?'** he says. **'My dad is Lebanese but I live in Australia. This is my first time in Lebanon.'** They welcome me graciously and talk to me about the state of Lebanon.



# conversations with the lebanese socrates

## محادثات مع سقراط اللبناني



**'They're talking about burning the banks.'** The engineer says, like it's a relief and a forbidden pleasure. **'I saw people gathering at the ATMs, it looked like something was going to happen.'** I tell them. By the time we reach the highway we're discussing marriage and relationships. The policeman is engaged and the engineer tells me his friend wants another wife. **'Why do you want a second wife? You're selfish.'** The men laugh like they've told him the same thing many times over. **'Why?'** he's smiling as he fights back. **'Worry about getting married to the first one.'** The engineer grins **'Listen to her.'**

Over the rushing wind and the sound of surrounding traffic, we speak like close friends, leaning in to hear each other. **'Dependency is beautiful. What do you think?'** The policeman gazes expectantly waiting for my answer. **'Dependency is beautiful for men because they don't have to rely on anyone. I think it can be beautiful if you're worthy of being depended on.'** He concedes, thoughtfully nodding as he says **'It takes time to get someone to trust you.'** **'Exactly and you want two wives.'** The car erupts and I'm laughing with them, grateful for the conversation and the kindness of three strangers.



# converstions with the lebanese socrates

## محادثات مع سقراط اللبناني

A few days later my high school teacher and I take a road trip to Batroun. Silver curls, a gap-toothed grin, with dark eyes like crescent moons. She is exactly like I remember, except older and more cynical, the two seemingly to go hand in hand. The sea is clear, warm like bathwater and we smile brightly as we dip our hair underneath the surface, kicking our legs to keep afloat. I turn over and spread my body into the shape of a starfish, inflating my chest and letting the tide carry me. I shut my eyes against the glaring sun and listen to the waves as they rush and retreat on the shore. I try to slow my breathing and take in this moment before it passes. In my mind I keep repeating the same affirmation;

'I am so happy. I am so happy. I am here and I am so happy.'

I tell myself this is a perfect moment and that I'll never forget it. As the midday sun beats down on us, we fold our towels and pack them into our bags, making our way back to the car. We sit with the doors open, groaning as the cold air hits our faces.



At five in the afternoon, Junnade and I make our way to Harissa. We buy our tickets for the cable car and soon we are suspended hundreds of meters above the ground. The horizon stretches endlessly, in a soft miasma of blush pink and yellow light. Virgin mary stands with her arms open, face stained by tears, adorned in a crown of stars. I walk inside the small cathedral, holding my palm out as jewelled sunlight filters through the glass stained windows and onto my fingers.

On the way home, we stop at a restaurant. Mushroom ravioli, creme brulee, and jasmine tea. We sit for hours speaking about what it means as diaspora to return to our home countries. Here most things are broken or dysfunctional and you're pleasantly surprised when they aren't. Art isn't uselessly intellectual, it's visceral and important because here, things have to mean something. Here the galleries reflect my face like a thousand mirrors. Here my body feels like my body, instead of someone else's property. Here my ancestors have walked and I wonder if my footsteps are touching the same place theirs have been years before. I wonder if this land is engraved in my skin, as it was theirs. In my nose. In things I had once believed were ugly.











city girl goes to the village <33







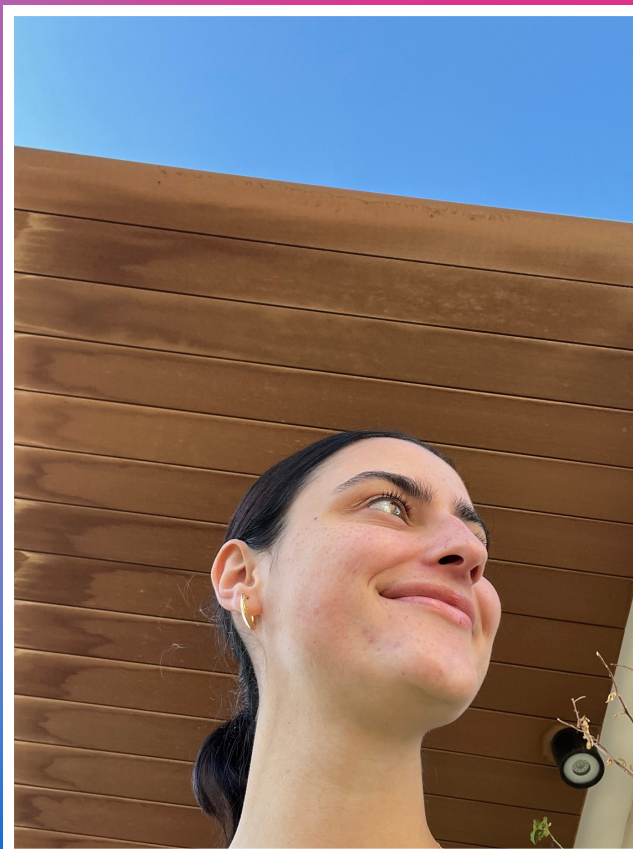
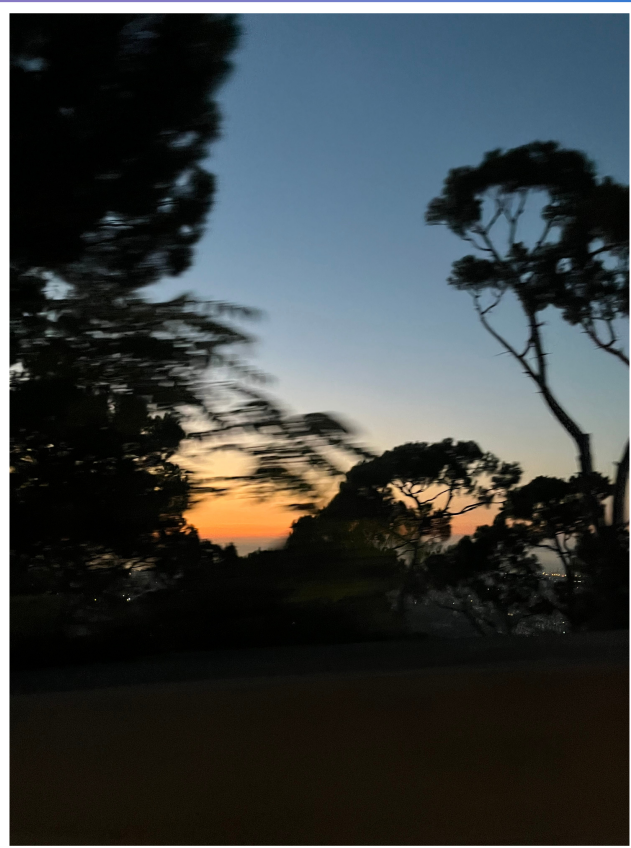




a wholesome day, with new and old friends :)











you can take the girl out of sydney!











# sana helwa ya gameel

## سنة حلوة يا جميل

The man I met in a bar  
Tells me to scratch the skin of the lebanese.  
They are poets and storytellers,  
They will lie.

The man I met in a bar  
Tells me they like to pretend.  
Doesn't everyone?  
Aren't we pretending right now?

We are dancing,  
Dealing words like cards,  
Hiding and seeking at the same time.

The man I met in a bar  
Tells me he doesn't like to think about

Time  
or Being

To be reminded of either is a reality he would like to ignore.

I say,  
To think too far ahead is to fear.  
To feel is,  
To celebrate

You are here.



# driving to the mina القيادة الى الميناء

I only know English  
The driver, Arabic.  
We speak in numbers,  
I show him one and we agree.

The wind is blowing my hair in my face,  
I am sweating through my clothes.  
I'm listening to a French song,  
Passing by billboards,  
Bleached white by the sun.

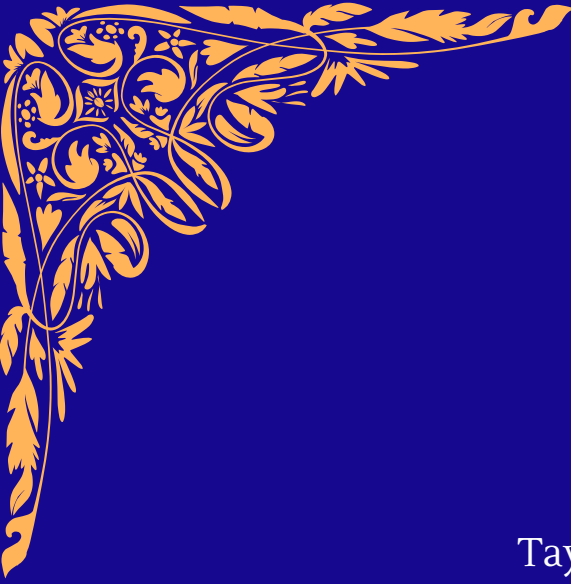
I am here and not of here,  
Here and yet from the way I dress  
They know I am not here.

I am not a place that you can live,  
I am a feeling that passes.  
I am a history that changes,  
I am the soul and not the person,  
Small, never ending even as you try to kill it,  
Quiet and strong.

I am your villain,  
A woman who is not afraid to be a woman.

My bangles ring loudly as I walk,  
My eyes are slits warning to keep away,  
Even as I refuse to look away.  
This city is mine as it is yours,  
This city was a promise that never came.  
Now it is not.





# driving to the mina القيادة الى الميناء

Tayteh cooks for me.  
We grind the garlic and the kitchen sings,  
With our hands we feed each other.

Tayteh complains that she never leaves the house,  
She is wrinkled, soft.  
Yearning and still.

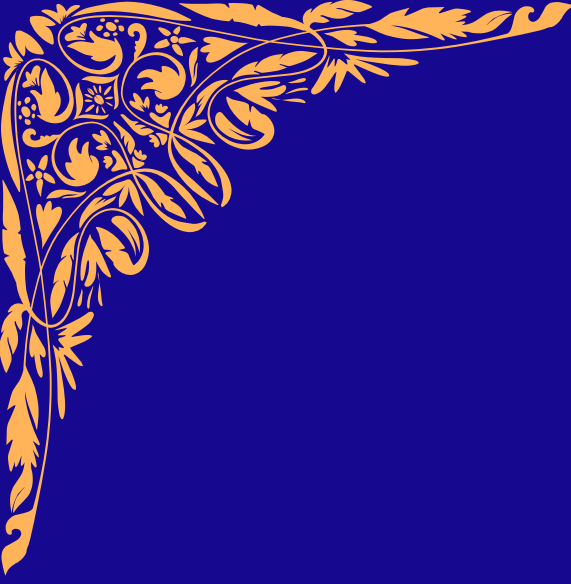
I tell her all the places I want to go,  
Bur she doesn't want to leave.  
This is the way it has been.

I tell her I will wait,  
She smokes a cigarette.  
Then another.  
Once more.  
She dresses slowly,  
I wait slowly.

She grips me close,  
Tells me stories of floods,  
Palaces,  
Princesses held captive,  
Hangings.  
I take it all in like it will be the last time.

'Wherever I go I make house'  
She tells me.

I walk with her until the sun falls down



# untitled بدون عنوان

Where will I find myself?  
In the frayed leather seats of a taxi,  
Or the worn red carpet of Al-mansouri  
With gates that lock me out  
Where I am waiting.

Am I walking on the street, my feet  
pulsing and sore.  
Or am I watching from above,  
Writing this poem.  
Have I travelled so far that I cannot  
Find myself

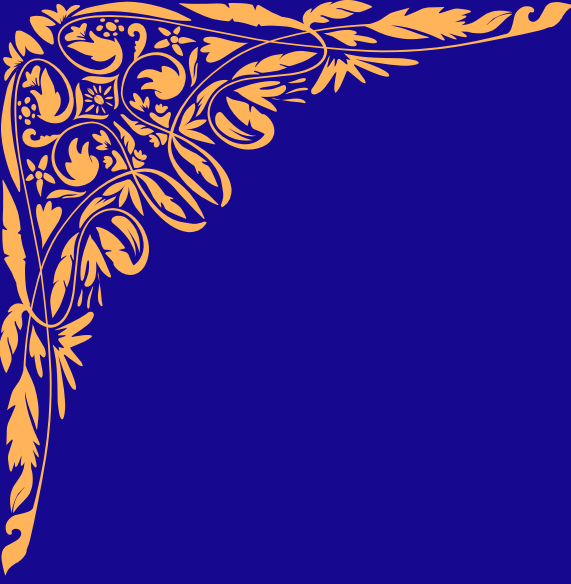
That's what I have wanted.  
For the heat and the sweat to  
Suffocate me.  
For the sounds to seep into my silence  
Fill what was once empty.

This is my death and this is my life,  
Always searching,

Wanting,

Waiting





# tripoli طرابلس

Words come back to me like pictures i've seen,  
From photo albums,  
Before I could remember.  
When Tripoli was beautiful,  
Before the rubbish filled the river.

Why do we hold on so tight  
Even when it hurts?

Why do we forget that we can begin,  
again and again.  
That we don't have to be who we were once.

Why do we repeat our past, like a broken record?

Because it was the most beautiful song.



nabu  
نابو

Here we drive down the mountain side  
And all the pictures look like me.  
And I see myself in them. I see my eyes  
My nose and I begin to cry.  
Like a wall full of small mirrors,  
I feel every angle of myself.

And I am the most beautiful being.

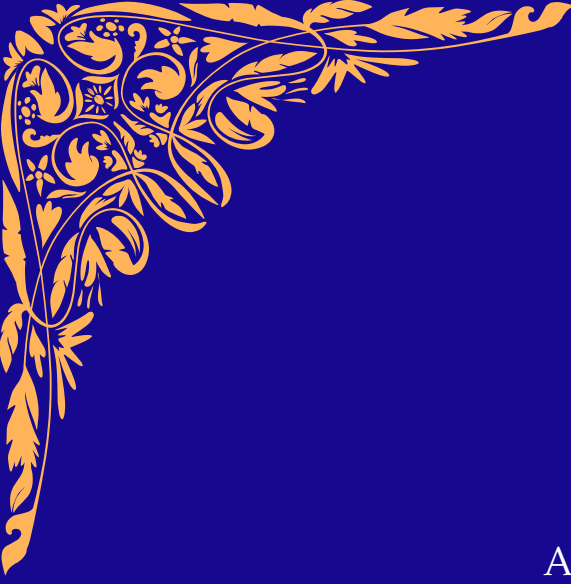
Here. the women have stretch marks  
Folds and wrinkles in their skin.  
They are not untouchable,  
They are near to me.

They sit in the water, facing each other.  
They swing their arms back and forth,  
Fingers sifting through sand.

Here when they smile  
I remember what it is to be a child.

I remember what it means to be unafraid.

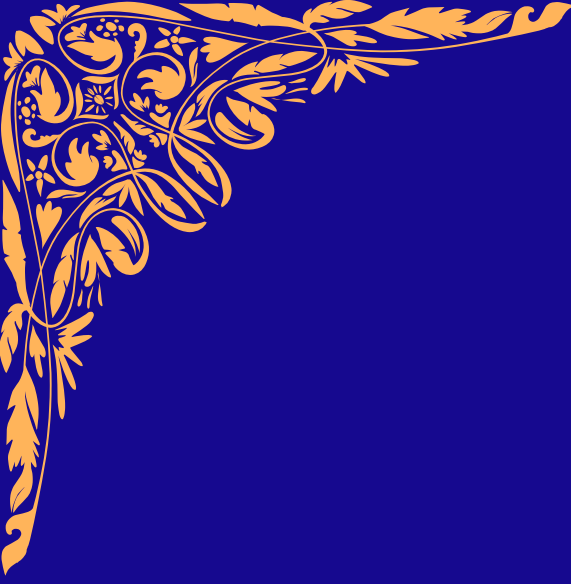




# habibi alby حبيبي قلبي

In this place everyone calls me habibi alby,  
My love, love of my heart.  
And my love, I love to hear them call me so dearly.  
And in the taxis I sit with strangers,  
Quietly at first.  
Until they ask me the most philosophical questions,  
I smile as I think of what to say and how to say it.  
Love of my heart,

How the people love with their hearts,  
And die by their hearts  
And live and suffer with pain in their heart  
And how they speak like poets  
And how they make you feel like family,  
Even when you aren't.  
How they make you want to stay,



your own ambivalence

التناقض الخاص بك

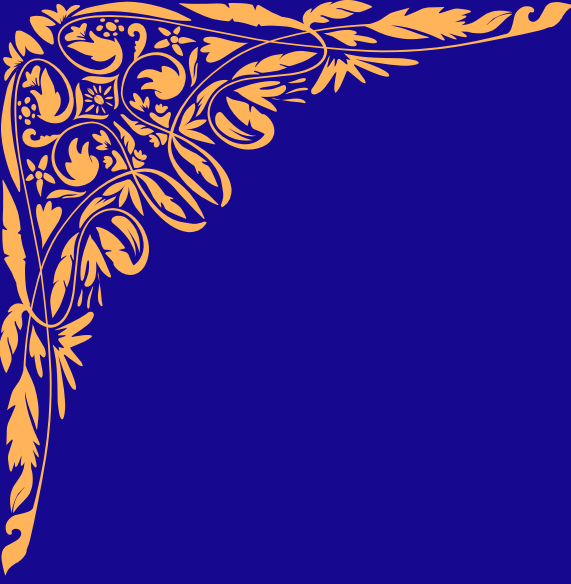
This sea is deceiving me,  
I am falling in love  
But this love is an image.  
One tucked away between the pages of a book,  
Carelessly forgotten.  
Never bet your life on someone else's,  
Never ask them to carry you.  
You must carry yourself.  
Fall down when you tire,  
Rise again when you recover  
And walk this path gathering companions  
As they fall beside you.  
Waving goodbye as they leave,  
Missing them once they have gone.

You will love and you will grieve,

This will be your fate  
Your curse.

Your own ambivalence.





things to remember to tell  
junnade in the morning  
أشياء يجب تذكرها في الصباح

Our fate is not set.  
Like seas move and shift,  
Water rises and falls.

Our lives are not engraved in gold,

Our lives are like paths.

The start of the path is birth and the end is death,  
There are many different ways to reach death.  
It depends on whether we stop to rest or retrace our steps,  
If we turn back or if we run forward and surrender.

Even Layla and Majnun,  
Their love was not destined.  
But their belief that it was, made it so.

God gives us our fate,  
For us to decide if we are courageous enough to take it.

He made Layla love Majnun  
&  
Majnun love Layla.

But he did not condemn them to love,

As if love is a burden to bare,  
As if love is a debt to pay,  
As if it were a weakness and not a strength.



things to remember to tell  
junnade in the morning  
أشياء يجب تذكرها في الصباح

Every thing stood in their way,  
Their love echoed through time and space,  
Beads of sand,  
Breathless sighs.

When enough time had passed Allah sat on Layla's shoulder,  
Whispered hopefully,

Try once more.

But when she stood across from Majnun she saw their love,  
Wither and curl. Like a browning flower in this Lebanon  
summer.

They chose to cut the stem.

The fault is not in the flower dear Junnade  
For the flower grows mindlessly, dies mindlessly.  
But in ourselves for wishing a flower to be unlike a flower.

In mistaking it's beauty for treachery  
We only deceive ourselves  
That we have no control over our future.

In reality we are the gardener and the flower,  
To neglect the flower is to cast ourselves aside.





tiny fingers  
أصابع صغيرة

Sand like smooth glass and all the while I am holding you,  
In love and contempt  
My friend.

The foreigners fix their bikini straps,  
Perform apathy.  
Plant umbrellas like imperial flags  
And all the while I am holding you,  
Like grandfathers hold prayer beads in their tired,  
relentless grasp.

I would burn just to feel your warmth,

Your cold damp hand on the side of my hip.  
Is it wrong to claim a person?  
To want a person to claim you.

The old man folds his arms behind his back  
As he guards the pebbles.  
Pacing down and up,  
His belly sagging, white wisps of hair.  
All the while I am holding you,  
In forgiveness and disgust.  
And you are still,  
Never knowing, never seeing.

The pregnant lady rubs her stomach,  
Her breasts are heavy,  
Her smile is wide,  
All the while,

I let go of your touch



# blood orange برتقال دم الزغلول

This city has soured  
Like a blood orange not yet ripe.  
Love turns cold and distant.  
The people hold out their palms,  
But I cannot fill their hunger  
With all the food in the world.

This hunger is in their blood  
And beneath my skin rests a snake,  
Coiling and shifting.  
Restless,  
Ready to strike an outstretched arm.

All that is left is the ruins,  
Which are somehow more whole than the rest of Beirut.  
A place left in splinters and shards.  
I walk barefoot as the pieces slice through my feet,  
I do not pick them out  
And with each step they sink deeper into my skin.

This promise has been engraved in me.  
Once you come to Libnan do you ever leave?  
Will this place ever leave you?

In a city that should have been destroyed  
One thousand and one times over  
Why do we continue to survive.

Is this decay what life has become,  
Is this defeat what life must be.





junnade's skin  
is written in farsi,  
جلده مكتوب بالفارسية

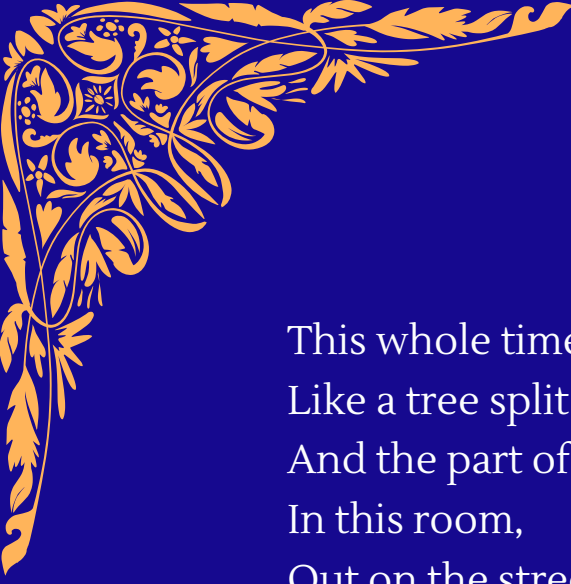
His mind is filled with poetry.  
His fingers are laced in gold,  
His words dance in the night.

Turning and flowing like water in a river,  
Word to word,  
Stone to stone.

Floating on the breeze,

He shares with me the secrets of being.  
And his light is a flame burning up,  
Never growing old.

Yes he is the prince of lovers,  
Laughing shamelessly.  
Dancing with secrets hidden behind his teeth.



## fatima's hand يد فاطمة

This whole time I've been growing apart,  
Like a tree split in half  
And the part of me that was missing is here.  
In this room,  
Out on the street,  
In the voices of the strangers who shout 'Dahlahon!'  
As I look around at the buildings in confusion.  
'Tikram aynek.'

So many questions I wanted to answer,  
So many questions I've asked.  
I've found my sister,  
The one I never knew I had.  
The one who looks like me,

But she is not me.  
She is smiling and laughing  
And her smile is easy  
And her laugh sounds like a drum.  
Heavy and strong,  
Echoing in my blood,  
Creeping down my shoulders.  
She takes me in her arms,  
I lean my head in her neck  
And she says  
"I missed you my love,  
I've been waiting here this whole time."

And there is nothing to say,  
All I can do is cry in museums.



